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ABSTRACT

Based on William Golding's novel "Lord of the Flies," this lesson plan presents activities designed to help students understand that, on a literal level, the novel deals with what happens to a group of boys stranded on an island; and that on a symbolic level, it investigates what happens to civilized people when the structures of civilization disappear. The main activity in the lesson involves students forming groups to present arguments and to judge who was responsible for the events on the island. It includes objectives, materials, procedures, adaptations, discussion questions, evaluation methods, extension activities, annotations of suggested readings and web links, vocabulary, and related academic standards and benchmarks addressed in the lesson plan. The lesson plan also contains a description of a video clip related to the lesson, comprehension questions related to the video clip, and answers to those comprehension questions. (RS)

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TITLE OF LESSON PLAN: Lord of the Flies

LENGTH OF LESSON: Two class periods

GRADE LEVEL: 6-8

SUBJECT AREA: Literature

CREDIT: Summer Productions, Inc.

OBJECTIVES: Students will understand the following:

1. On a literal level, *Lord of the Flies* deals with what happens to a group of boys stranded on an island with no adult supervision.

2. On a symbolic level, *Lord of the Flies* investigates what happens to civilized people when the structures of civilization disappear.

MATERIALS:
For this lesson, you will need:

The novel *Lord of the Flies*

PROCEDURE:

1. Throughout discussions about the novel, guide students to focus on what happens on the literal level in the book and what that development means on the symbolic level. That is, what happens literally to the boys, and what is the author saying metaphorically about the structures of civilization?

2. With the preceding discussion as background, divide your students into three groups:

- One group is the rescued boys who should look at the entire time on the island through Jack's point of view.
- One group is the rescued boys who should look at the entire time on the island through Ralph's point of view.
- One group will act as an audience of adult judges—parents, police, and other authority figures; this group will ask questions of the two groups of boys and pass judgment on them.

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3. While the group acting as judges prepares questions for both groups, the groups supporting Jack and Ralph should consider the following questions by way of preparing for questions from the adults:

- What happened?
- What events does each boy have firsthand knowledge of?
- What events did each boy only hear about?
- Which actions will each boy defend the most emphatically?
- What will each boy say about the others?

4. The group acting as judges should prepare questions for both groups. In order to come to a fair judgment, what do the judges need to find out? How can they look beyond the boys' personalities and leadership styles to find an accurate depiction of what happened on the island? Explain that the judgment group must create questions that elicit both objective and subjective answers.

5. After the adults have interrogated each boy, the judges should meet to formulate their conclusion: Who was responsible for each development during the boys' stay on the island? To what degree? Why do the judges hold specific boys responsible?

6. Judges should give out punishments—and possibly rewards—based on their findings. They may be creative in crafting consequences for each boy and may also consider making recommendations so that in the future society at large can avoid another destruction of a civilized group.

ADAPTATIONS:

Ask students to write papers in which they explain what Ralph and Jack represent and why some boys followed each.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. *Lord of the Flies* has been called "a fable in which the characters are symbols for abstract ideas." Explain this statement by analyzing each of the major characters (Ralph, Jack, Piggy, Simon, and Roger) in terms of his distinctive character traits and the human quality he might symbolize.

2. Defend and/or criticize Ralph's actions as leader. What were his motivations? Did he contribute to the tragedy in any way? Could he have acted to prevent any of the deaths? What would you have done differently in his situation?

3. Describe the religious imagery in *Lord of the Flies:* the forces of good and evil, a fall from grace, a savior, and eventual redemption. How does Golding's depiction of the island compare to the Garden of Eden?

4. Analyze the student population in your school and the various groups or cliques that exist. Discuss whether there are certain mannerisms, clothing preferences, behavior codes, or other qualities that characterize each group. Have you ever known a group member outside the context of his or her group? Did that person behave differently when not under the direct influence of the group?

5. Some readers of *Lord of the Flies* have argued that each and every one of the boys' actions is nothing more than an attempt to survive in difficult conditions. Think about the mounting of the sow's head, Simon's ascent up the mountain, and the murder of Piggy in particular, as well as any other key scenes that stand out for you. Is it fair to say that the boys' actions were merely the result of the human survival instinct? Why or why not? If so, can you use these examples to draw some general conclusions about the human instinct to survive?

6. Suppose the plot of *Lord of the Flies* involved a planeload of marooned girls, or a mixed group of girls and boys, instead of all boys. Do you think the same violent and cruel tendencies would have emerged on the island? Explain your answer in detail. If you think the outcome would have been different, explain how and why.

EVALUATION:

You may evaluate students on their participation in each group. Note which students have prepared questions and planned answers and which have not. Pay attention, too, to the clarity and smoothness with which each student speaks.

EXTENSION:

On the Return of the Lost Boys
Have your students write a news story or produce a news video about the boys' return to England. As reporters, students should pretend they have conducted four or five interviews with the surviving boys, the adult who rescued them, their parents, teachers, and child psychology experts as well as the man on the street. They should prepare statements made by "interviewees." Overall they should organize their story or video to cover the "five *W*s and *H*"—*Who? What? Where? When? Why?* And *How?* If students are shooting a video, they can add to its realism by dressing actors in clothing that fits their roles.

Design a Curriculum
Ask your students to imagine that they and their fellow students may one day have to face a challenge like that confronted by the boys in *Lord of the Flies*. Ask, "Would you be prepared to find yourself on a deserted tropical island with no adult supervision?" Then ask students to design a curriculum for a school semester that would teach the knowledge, values, and skills they would need to surmount all the challenges they would face. What content would the course include? What skills would be emphasized? What texts would be assigned to be read? How would the students be graded?

SUGGESTED READINGS:

***Lord of the Flies:* Modern Critical Interpretations**
Harold Bloom, ed. Chelsea House Publishing, 1998.
In this interpretative companion to *Lord of the Flies*, students are introduced to Golding's brilliant work through a classic study of the book's structure, symbolism, and drama.

Peace in the Streets: Breaking the Cycle of Gang Violence
Arturo Hernandez. Child Welfare League of America, 1998.
This novel-like firsthand look at youth gangs provokes discussion about the parallels between Golding's fictional adventure and inner-city gangs of today.

WEB LINKS:

Lord of the Flies
A great site with a map of the island in *Lord of the Flies*, character sketches, information on the author, and an essay about a teacher's encounter with the author.
http://www.pernet.net/~chadly1/lord_of_the_flies/index.html

Poems About Lord of the Flies
Two poems that enhance the understanding of *Lord of the Flies*. *Lord of the Flies*: Story Analysis.
http://www.aufdenspring.com/ment.html

Lord of the Flies Question Sheets
A good site for many literature activities. There are questions, relationship assignments, and a growing-up portfolio project.
http://www3.sympatico.ca/ray.saitz/

Lord of the Flies Low Fat Version
Symbolism, character analysis, a map and more.
http://www.homework-online.com/homework-online/lotf/theme.html

Lord of the Flies: Story Analysis
3-D map rendering of the island, along with themes and other very useful information.
http://www.special-edition.com/flies/

VOCABULARY:

apprehension
Suspicion or fear especially of future evil.
Context:
The travelers' apprehension grew as the turbulence on the airplane became more violent.

depravity
A corrupt act or practice; moral corruption.
Context:
Natural human depravity often surfaces in times of war.

epilepsy
Any of various disorders marked by disturbed electrical rhythms of the central nervous system and typically manifested by convulsive attacks usually with clouding of consciousness.
Context:
The medication that controlled his epilepsy allowed Frank to safely drive a car.

irony
The use of words to express something other than and especially the opposite of the literal meaning.
Context:
It is a common irony—that the poorest people are sometimes the most generous.

profane
Serving to debase or defile what is holy.
Context:
Years ago, it was considered profane for women to attend church hatless.

prudent
Marked by wisdom or judiciousness; shrewd in the management of practical affairs.
Context:
The family turned to Aunt Cecilia, a prudent and trusted adviser, who could resolve their differences.

redemption
The act or process of freeing from the consequences of sin.
Context:
In the Christian tradition, baptism offers people redemption from original sin.

sadist
One who delights in cruelty.
Context:
The neighborhood bully was clearly a sadist who teased all of the younger children until they cried.

ACADEMIC STANDARDS:

Grade Level: 9-12

Subject Area: language arts

Standard: Demonstrates competence in the general skills and strategies for reading a variety of literary texts.

Benchmarks: Understands the effects of complex literary devices and techniques on the overall quality of a work (e.g., tone, irony, mood, figurative language, allusion, diction, dialogue, symbolism, point of view, style).

Grade Level: 9-12

Subject Area: language arts

Standard: Demonstrates competence in the general skills and strategies of the reading process.

Benchmarks: Identifies and analyzes the philosophical assumptions and basic beliefs underlying an author's work.

Grade Level: 9-12

Subject Area: behavioral studies

Standard: Understands conflict, cooperation, and interdependence among individuals, groups, and institutions.

Benchmarks: Understands that conflict between people or groups may arise from competition over ideas, resources, power, and/or status.

Grade Level: 9-12

Subject Area: civics

Standard: Understands the sources, purposes, and functions of law, and the importance of the rule of law for the protection of individual rights and the common good.

Benchmarks: Knows alternative ideas about the sources of law (e.g., custom, Supreme Being, sovereigns, legislatures) and different varieties of law (e.g., divine law, natural law, common law, statute law, international law); knows alternative ideas about the

purposes and functions of law (e.g., regulating relationships among people and between people and their government; providing order, predictability, security, and established procedures for the management of conflict; regulating social and economic relationships in civil society).

Grade Level: 9-12

Subject Area: civics

Standard: Understands how certain character traits enhance citizens' ability to fulfill personal and civic responsibilities.

Benchmarks:
Understands the importance of dispositions that lead citizens to become independent members of society, such as self-discipline, self-governance, and individual responsibility (i.e., fulfilling the moral and legal obligations of membership in society).

Understands how changes in social and political institutions (e.g., church, school, political party) both reflect and affect individuals' career choices, values, and significant actions.

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Video Information and Comprehension Questions

Video Description
Examine the provocative moral claims of this popular adventure story and learn how parallels are being drawn between the book and today's inner-city gangs and disaffected youth.

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Download Comprehension Questions & Answers

The Comprehension Questions are available to download as an RTF file. You can save the file to your desktop and open it in a word processing program.

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TITLE OF VIDEO:
Lord of the Flies

VIDEO COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS:

1. What inspired Golding to write *Lord of the Flies*?

2. Why do some people see *Lord of the Flies* as a metaphor for youth violence?

3. In what key ways was the world the boys left different than the world they encountered on the island?

4. Compare Jack's leadership style to Ralph's.

5. Describe the two groups that emerged under the leadership of Ralph and Jack. How are their values and priorities different?

6. What does Piggy's death symbolize?

7. How does the boys' fear of "the beast"—which is merely, as Simon discovers, the corpse of a downed airman—act as a plot instigator in the story?

8. How did their eventual rescue affect the boys who survived their time on the island?

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Lord of the Flies

VIDEO COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS:

1. What inspired Golding to write *Lord of the Flies*?
Golding found the students he taught during his 20 years as a schoolteacher to be ripe material for probing the mind of a child. In addition, *Coral Island,* an adventure novel about shipwrecked boys that Golding had read as a child, provided him with plot ideas that he eventually incorporated into *Lord of the Flies*.

2. Why do some people see *Lord of the Flies* as a metaphor for youth violence?
Today's headlines bring us unbelievable but true stories about violent youth gangs, weapons and shootings in schools, and children killing children. This youth violence often occurs in the absence of the discipline and order that are usually provided by adults—exactly the situation depicted in *Lord of the Flies*.

3. In what key ways was the world the boys left different than the world they encountered on the island?
The boys left a world in which their lives were ordered. They had institutions such as school, church, family, and government to provide them with rules and structure—and also help meet their basic physical needs of clothing, food, and shelter. They had, in essence, few responsibilities—which was definitely not the case on the island, where they were forced to create everything from a signal fire to a sense of order on their own.

4. Compare Jack's leadership style to Ralph's.
Ralph is strong, mature, and confident, and he acts and speaks with self-assurance and consideration for others; his first priority is to be rescued. Jack is immature, selfish, careless, and motivated by blood lust. His priorities are hunting and sustaining his image and position among the boys.

5. Describe the two groups that emerged under the leadership of Ralph and Jack. How are their values and priorities different?
The boys who followed Ralph were closely aligned with the values of the world they left behind—justice, fairness, equality, and reasoned decision making. Rescue, naturally, was their top priority. Jack's group valued physical strength and embraced a "survival of the fittest" moral code that included cruelty toward other, weaker boys. Hunting for sport and survival became their top priority.

6. What does Piggy's death symbolize?
Piggy's death symbolizes the total destruction of culture, civilization, and reason by evil and violence. Golding's larger message is that cruelty exists in all of us—even children—and can be unleashed at any time, under the right circumstances.

7. How does the boys' fear of "the beast"—which is merely, as Simon discovers, the corpse of a downed airman—act as a plot instigator in the story?
The fear of "the beast" instigates a conflict between Ralph and Jack. Jack and his boys become obsessed with hunting it down, to the neglect of their other duties—including the maintenance of the signal fire, which dies out just before an airplane passes overhead.

8. How did their eventual rescue affect the boys who survived their time on the island?
Ralph's life was literally saved by the rescue, because Jack's boys were hunting him at the time. At the presence of an adult, the other boys immediately reverted to their former selves, becoming instantly fearful and crying.

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